



## **MEETING MINUTES / 20 OCTOBER 2020**

**\*\*MEETING WAS CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS\*\***

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Present: Baldwin, Lopez, Lardizzone, Magner, Miller, Sarg, Seppala, Sutton, Showell

Excused: Bradley, Farley, McMullen

Guests: Jacob Dillon (Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center)

### **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:**

Public comments during the Commission meeting will require the Commission up to 48 hours for a response.

### **MEETING MINUTES:**

Sutton makes note of 11<sup>th</sup> line spelling correction and 15<sup>th</sup> line grammar correction of prior minutes. Prior minutes motioned to approved with Sutton's changes by Sarg seconded by Magner.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:**

#### **Wilmington VAMC – Jacob Dillon, VA Public Affairs Officer**

Rise in COVID-19 cases within the hospital and emphasizes precautions where possible and remarks to encourage veterans not to delay essential care by calling 1-800-461-8262 option 2 to schedule appointments. Increasing capacity in hospital foot traffic while remaining open for care. Growing concern that veterans have delayed care, especially mental health care.

VA is offering Flu shots to enrolled veterans via drive-thru clinics on West entrance of the Wilmington VAMC from 9a.m. to 3p.m. Monday through Friday.

CBOC's hours are posted online.

October 24<sup>th</sup> pop-up Flu clinic at Sussex County CBOC and at Harrington Moose Lodge.

(Lopez) Addresses feedback/technical difficulties with zoom meeting and difficult to catch all information.

(Dillon) Will share slide deck from veteran town hall. Moving forward encourage veterans to not delay essential health care. VA Hospital and CBOC clinics remain open and ready for care. Wear a mask and practice hand hygiene while enforcing physical distancing. If a veteran is not feeling well, call ahead, call your doctor, stay at home. We're in the middle of our Flu vaccination clinic that started September 29<sup>th</sup> and runs until November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Kent County CBOC is doing Friday's by appointment from 1p.m to 3:30p.m. Sussex County CBOC from 1p.m to 3p.m. Flu vaccinations available at any scheduled medical appointment and if received in the community simply notify the VA through [Wilmington.va.gov](http://Wilmington.va.gov) flu clinic section to ensure documentation.

Refill prescriptions up to 10 days prior from home via My HealtheVet and over the phone.

Pharmacy service has been proactive in offsetting any delays in U.S. mail to fill prescriptions. Townhall went over expansion of the caregiver program and services across the board to open to, as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, to veterans who served before May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975 and opening to all veterans next year October 1<sup>st</sup>.

In final stages of finalizing the new clinic at the Blue Hen Mall with an anticipated open date of four to six weeks. Any questions?

(Lopez) Is the new caregiver program going to be open to all veterans? Other era veterans were not able to apply for the program unless they applied for aid and attendance.

(Dillon) The first phase is going to be veterans who served 1975 and before and then October 1 next year it'll be open to all veterans. At [caregiver.va.gov](https://caregiver.va.gov) all details are available. I'll be sure to share the slides that have a consolidated list of resources with all the FAQ's, other links, and phone number to call directly.

(Lopez) Excellent, thank you.

(Sarg) What's the status of the imaging contract services in Kent County for the Blue Hen Mall CBOC?

(Dillon) I know they built it with the capabilities to expand, but it won't be part of it during the first phase of the opening.

(Sarg) Last meeting we spoke to Vince Kane about that they were working on getting imaging contract with the community rather than going up to Elsmere, any progress on that? Nothing is happening.

(Dillon) That status remains the same at this moment. We can follow up on that, my email is [Jacob.dillon@va.gov](mailto:Jacob.dillon@va.gov) if you want to follow up with me offline. That capability is built into the plans in the future but right now it's not happening.

(Sarg) I know that's the reason we need to go to contract services until radiology services become available within the Blue Hen Mall. Thank you, Jacob.

(Dillon) You're welcome.

(Lopez) Any other questions for Jacob? Ok, thank you, Jacob for the update, we appreciate it. Thank you for sending the slide deck to us and look forward to looking at the information in there.

### **Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) –**

(Lopez) Is anyone on from the Delaware Veterans Home?

(Baldwin) I don't believe so Ms. Lopez, but yesterday I received a call from Mr. Green at the home and they have appointed a temporary person.

(Lopez) Who?

(Baldwin) Carol Ekhart I believe, they'll call me back today at some point to discuss her role and introduce herself. I understand that this is temporary. Interviews for that position have not started yet. I have assurances that when they do the commission will be on the panel. I've asked Lardizzone and Sarg if they'd be interested in joining us as part of the interview process.

(Lopez) One of the other things to follow up with them on was who from the Commission sits of their executive board. Since COVID those meetings stopped for the most part. So, we can follow up with whoever gets appointed to hold the position down permanently.

(Baldwin) Some friends of mine have started a PPE emergency pandemic equipment for people and I went out and asked folks at the DVH and HOB to provide some input on their monthly expenditures for those types of items. I got zero feedback. The other day I went to the Pearl Center in Wilmington. They let me know they could use a thousand masks, five-hundred gloves, and ten gallons of sanitizer. Within minutes we had it on its way over there at no cost to the Pearl Center. This came from Bank of America, about a hundred thousand dollars' worth of donated equipment. I'll tell the DVH and HOB that it's crazy if they're still spending money when we have a warehouse full of it. Just wanted to share because I saw HOB is next and I don't know if anyone is on from there.

(Sarg) Mr. Baldwin, in reference to the PPE at the DVH, last month Tina indicated that they had a 30-day supply of PPE there, but of course that could be depleted quickly so definitely get in touch.

(Baldwin) I will, and I'll see what they need and get it down there to them.

(Sarg) Thank you, sir.

(Lopez) Also, consider other organizations that could use that equipment, if its there, let's get it out to folks.

(Baldwin) I was told they'd consider any request from any non-profit 501(c)(3).

(Lopez) Thank you, Chair.

### **Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:**

Not Present

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

(Lopez) there is a Stand Down meeting October 22 at 1p.m. at the American Legion Post 3 in Milford, possible date or time change. Any update or change will be discussed and shared.

Pat Cerchio, New PTSD treatment

Stellate Ganglion Block (SGB), 15-minute procedure to help reset fight or flight response and take away some symptoms. SGB aids in reduction and in some cases eliminate need for certain medications for anxiety and depression. New for PTSD with more than 20 studies, developed around 1945 with minimal short-term side effects in some cases. Not a drug, not commercial. SGB is not covered by Tricare. A doctor in Annapolis is offering this service for as long as there is funding.

(Lopez) It's something to share and see if anyone is interested in doing it. We should consider putting this information out.

(Cerchio) Links provided with more information and testimonials.

(Lopez) Thank you, Pat.

Dave Skocik, Veterans Coalition

Thank you to the new PAO Jacob Dillon.

Made presentation to a retired navy veteran who won two gold medals with a photo op.

DVA website will soon be updated.

28<sup>th</sup> of October will be the quarterly Friends of Delaware Veterans Trust Fund zoom meeting. No annual dinner this year, decided several months ago. 2021 dinner is reserved for next year.

Modern Maturity Center continuing their dinners with proper precautions.

Annual October fundraiser for the Trust Fund is happening, will be meeting them for a check presentation on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Friends account funds will be reported during the zoom meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Continuing our monthly DVA meetings with proper safety measures.

Attended Gala 17 October at Everett Theatre in Middletown to fundraise for Watchmaking Initiative and yet to be known amount raised for the It's about time foundation. Thank you.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Magner:**

Interments – 84 (+16)

VVA will be delivering flags to the Cemetery today. No flags for the PVA.

### **Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Magner:**

Interments – 27 (-2)

### **Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:**

DOD plans to push dependents and retirees into civilian sector for care during pandemic.

DE is an underserved community and moving to civilian sector will overwhelm them.

DAV HR 7504 civilian providers must meet same requirements and guidelines as VA health providers. Civilian providers must also have military cultural training. An issue that exists in the school system with counselors.

Brain Injury Committee. After TBI among Veterans article of interest. Significant due to Delaware's limited capabilities for treating of Dementia patients, even at the Veterans Home who has a maximum of 20 patients for the dementia wing.

(Baldwin) Numbers at the Veterans Home are 57 right now, if it drops below 50 is that an issue for the home and something we need to worry about?

(Sarg) That's information from Lardizzzone. If we don't have a sufficient number in there, funding issues will pop up.

(Baldwin) Thank you.

(Lardizzzone) That was from the VA. Once that number goes down, they will lose their VA funding. We need to talk to Secretary of State to allow us to start getting more veterans in the home. We have veterans who need to get in that aren't being allowed in.

(Sarg) The Veterans Home has been closed and no admissions meeting since last February. We have no idea how many applications are in the queue to present to the admissions committee. A request must be reviewed and voted on by the committee.

Additionally, a federal bill senate 4166 introduced by a senator from Arizona regarding veterans with service-connected life-threatening conditions who contract COVID and die, their family would receive survivor benefits under this act. Let's watch and support this bill to ensure these benefits.

(Baldwin) Thank you and will be in touch in the next day or two with you both on that.

(Lopez) Thank you Sarg. Chair Baldwin do you want to make any comments before your organizational report?

(Balwin) I'll do that in my portion below. I would like to mention Secretary Bullocks email regarding the Bear Cemetery. Recognition to staff members who are recipients of the Delaware award for heroism. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the shooting death of an interned veteran's parents, immediate actions of these individuals deserve recognition. Well done to the folks at the cemetery. I will go congratulate them in person.

(Lopez) Excellent. It's great they're being recognized.

### **Legislative Affairs, Commissioner Sarg:**

Sent out copies of the updated 17 October 2020, 2021 Legislative recommendations & concerns. Main update is section four on page four concerning problems and recommendations for the DVH. Please look and review it with your organizations and provide any feedback you may have so we can get that for the November meeting. I want it finalized and signed by our December meeting for presentation to Legislature in January 2021.

Senator Lawson gave a review of organizations that received funding through the grant and aid bill and did not list the veteran organizations. I emailed thanking him and stated that Senate bill 260 of 2020 allocated 0.006% was awarded to veteran organizations. We need to keep them operational by increasing their funding as a recommendation with him for the finance committee. Senator Lawson responded stating he would try and get support allocating increased funds to the veteran's organizations.

(Baldwin) Thank you. Great job on the catch with the Senator. Colonel you do a fantastic job on keeping them honest. We're lucky to have you.

(Lopez) On behalf of the non-profits, it has become increasingly hard to support veterans and the community. We appreciate you Sarg for pushing this. Thank you for your hard work and valuable information.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:**

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 4; Granted 3 (75%); Awarded \$4,485.00; Balance - \$83,230.00 (Matticks) To reiterate from the executive meeting we need to look over the policy memorandum and update it from 2017.

(Baldwin) Thank you. We did do 6 interviews for the executive director position last week. Ms. Lopez and I made our recommendations and the Secretary of State's office is going to be making their decision in several days. It was a good experience with a good pool of candidates. Mr. Matticks is doing a great job in holding the fort down here. He, Sable, and the staff have been keeping us updated and it is appreciated.

(Lopez) Thank you, Chair Baldwin. Thank you for the update, we're anxious to get the position filled. Thank you, Josh Matticks.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:**

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)  
Not present

Commissioner Miller (American Legion - AL)  
Nothing to report

Commissioner Bradley (American Veterans - AMVETS)  
Not present

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)  
Served 74 veterans this past month.  
15 approved for disability for the month prior.  
Chapter will have a Christmas party on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December for Chapter 1. Hoping to get 50 people.  
Thank you, Ron Sarg, for the check.  
NSO will come from Reno.  
Will call director at benefits office for status of closure in Wilmington. Secretary is still on furlough since May 14 and cannot come to work until the office reopens.  
Thank you.  
(Lopez) Is the NSO coming in going to cover the entire state?  
(Lardizzone) Yes, however he will stay in his office in Wilmington. There may be an office at the new clinic the service officer can use and will ask the director if that's still a go.  
(Lopez) Thank you, Lardizzone for the report.

Commissioner Farley (Marine Corps League - MCL)  
Not present

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)  
No formal meetings for the remainder of the year. Will attempt zoom meetings in January.  
29<sup>th</sup> of October is the Delaware Health Care forum meeting to discuss health care issues and plans.  
Military Construction Breakfast held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November will instead be a briefing for the base.

Commissioner Magner (Military Order of the Purple Heart - MOPH)  
Contacted our DEC and passed motion to donate \$1,000.00 to the veterans watch initiative and cashed on October 7<sup>th</sup>.  
October 22<sup>nd</sup> will be hosting a chapter 9377 virtual meeting and department commander Gary Morris will be attending.  
November 14<sup>th</sup> will be a virtual DEC meeting to see what can be done during the pandemic.  
New region 1 commander Christin Beck, a retired senior navy chief, navy seal.

Commissioner Phillips (Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW)  
Not present

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America – VVA)  
November 12<sup>th</sup> next meeting in person.  
Today at 1400, Lopez, myself, and General Berry will conduct a mini ceremony at the bridge and salute to veterans filming.  
Accompanied some veterans to a new Del Tech facility in Middletown for vocational training. To discuss with Del Tech and the Pearl Center to provide training courses for veterans that won't require basic courses prior to certification programs. Received a \$450,000 a year grant for the next three

years to help pay for training for homeless veterans or veterans in need who can contact Mr. Mosely at the Pearl Center to apply. A joint venture for covering certification costs. Diesel mechanics are in high demand here in Delaware.

At the end of the week Lopez and I will see our old boss Colonel Showell and catch up.

Commissioner Seppala (At Large, affiliated with Military Order of World Wars)

On September 25<sup>th</sup> attended a memorial ceremony at the Gold Star Families Monument.

3 represented the commission at the ceremony of maybe 30-40 people.

Chapter staff meetings have resumed by zoom for MOWW; membership hasn't met since February.

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

Regular meetings. Hybrid, virtual, and in-person. Low funds. Staying involved.

Will update as changes occur.

Commissioner Sutton (At Large)

Met with Baldwin to discuss role as a commissioner and will discuss later how to get more involved.

Commissioner Showell (At Large, affiliated with Delaware National Guard)

Tribute to General Timmons on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

On October 17<sup>th</sup> we held a camp honoree ceremony, Colonel retired Gary Dawson was named camp honoree. So, for a year he will serve as the representative attending training events throughout the year from Delaware National Guard.

#### **TERM COMPLETION:**

(Baldwin and Lopez) Mention that it's been taken care of.

#### **EVENTS:**

Nothing to report

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

(Sarg) Del Tech offering free work force training in healthcare by grant from DOL. Governor obtained \$10M in funding for jobs in critical shortage. Del Tech offering training from October 2020 through March 2021 for certifications in the medical field.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Nothing to report

#### **ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

(Baldwin) Will send out email in the next couple of days for review of the bylaws by the bylaws committee needed for next commission meeting.

#### **SPECIAL SESSION:**

Nothing to report

#### **EXECUTIVE MEETING:**

(Lopez) To be announced if next executive meeting the Thursday prior to next meeting.

**Thursday, 12 November 2020 at 1000  
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**

#### **NEXT MEETING:**

#### **LOCATION:**

**Tuesday, 17 November 2020 at 1000  
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**